



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2008

Contact: Norman Googel

Phone: (304) 558-8986

Attorney General McGraw Settles Investigation into Riddle & Associates; Ends in \$58,000 in Debt Cancelled for 292 WV Consumers

Attorney General Darrell McGraw's office was surprised when a West Virginia consumer received a collection letter from Riddle & Associates, P.C., threatening to add attorneys fees and collection costs unless the DIRECTV account was promptly paid in full. That is because Riddle had previously promised to end this unlawful collection practice in a 2004 settlement agreement with McGraw's office.

In response to McGraw's new investigation, Riddle explained that the new letter was sent in error to 292 West Virginia consumers and that the error was corrected as soon as it was discovered. Nonetheless, the Attorney General asked Riddle to sign a new agreement promising again to refrain from using the objectionable collection letter in West Virginia and Riddle agreed to do so. Riddle also agreed to pay \$5,000 to the State of West Virginia and to permanently refrain from collecting DIRECTV accounts in West Virginia.

Although DIRECTV was not aware of the objectionable letter, DIRECTV agreed to close the accounts with a zero balance of all persons who received the letter. As a result of this action, 292 West Virginia consumers were relieved of more than \$58,000 in alleged debt.

Attorney General McGraw stated, "Although we accept Riddle's explanation that the letter was sent in error, it was still necessary to require Riddle to take additional measures to insure continued compliance with state and federal debt collection law in the future. I am satisfied that the actions taken by Riddle and DIRECTV have resolved the concerns of my office about the West Virginia consumers who received the objectionable letter."

McGraw added, "We would like to thank DIRECTV for its cooperative efforts in agreeing to erase the debt of all consumers who received the Riddle letter."

Any persons wishing to file a complaint about a consumer matter or to alert the Attorney General about unfair or deceptive practices may do so by calling the Consumer Protection Hot Line, 1-800-368-8808, or by obtaining a complaint form from the consumer web page at www.wvago.gov.

##